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SOURCE: (A FIGHTING INTERNATIONAL OF MARINE WORKERS, by George Hardy, President of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. Published by the I.S.H. at Hamburg, October, 1930. Pages 23 - 27. 800.0B Int. of Seamen and Harbour Workers/21).

THE HISTORIC TASK OF CONFERENCE

This brings us to the logical outcome of the foregoing situation and to the historical decision this Conference must make, to which I referred in my opening remarks. This Conference must lay down a political and organisational basis that will enable the seamen, harbour and river workers to create a democratic and centrally organised international leadership that will assist in strengthening and widening the influence of the existing militant organisations that are at present relatively weak in several maritime countries. Therefore this Conference will give the answer in no uncertain terms to the shipowners' agents directing the policy of the International Transport Workers' Federation, as well as to its national affiliated organisations. We must declare for a real fighting International of seamen, harbour and river workers. The masses employed and unemployed who depend on the shipping industry for a living will welcome this serious, sharp and historical turn in the international labour movement. It will give them new hopes, and greater confidence and courage, and enable them to go forward to future struggles with the backing of the internationally organised marine workers.

Comrades and fellow workers: when we take this step it is not only an historical moment for the workers in the shipping industry, but for the whole international working class. It will also be regarded as such by the capitalist class

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class and the shipowners in particular, and by their agents in the various seamen's and dockers' unions, at the headquarters of the I.T.F., the "Amsterdam International," and the I.L.O. Our decision to form a fighting international of seamen and harbour workers will sharpen still further the class struggle and bring the political and organisational line into its correct perspective. Therefore it will at the same time strengthen the marine workers nationally and internationally.

The reactionary and fascist bureaucrats at London, Amsterdam and Geneva, together with their colonial lackeys, will hold council and with the shipowners and the various Governments, plan to stop the advancing marine workers under the leadership of an International expressing the demands of the men on the ships, on the docks and riversides, etc. But they will not succeed.

A CLASS INTERNATIONAL AND ITS STRENGTH

Whom should the International include? Firstly, it must be organised on the basis of the class struggle and upon the principles of industrial unionism. Therefore, as already indicated, it will include all workers directly connected with sea transport, both ashore and afloat.

Many of the independent unions already include seamen, harbour and river workers. Already there are a large number of seamen organised into these militant unions than the total membership of those unions affiliated to the I.T.F., even accepting the I.T.F. exaggerated figures. But the numerical strength does not even reflect accurately the two positions, for there are, notwithstanding the desertions from these so called seamen's unions, opposition and minority

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minority groups working inside every organisation affiliated to the I.T.F. But they have none inside the militant unions. These opposition groups should be extended until they capture the leadership of the masses in these unions, and bring them over to the proposed International. Therefore the new International from the beginning must include these opposition and minority groups as well as all independent unions who are prepared to fight the shipowners and all their hirelings. So the International will begin with its influence far beyond its numerical or organisational strength.

We must appeal to those unions affiliated to the I.T.F. where genuinely left masses have influence and win them over to the new International. But under no circumstances should we think the building of a new International can be accomplished mechanically. It can only be done by supporting all seamen, dockers, etc., in their daily struggles with the shipowners, dock employers and their henchmen in control of the unions. The seamen and dock workers will unite around a Programme of Action embodying their immediate demands as the experience of the last few years has shown, which they can draft themselves if given assistance by the more experienced workers.

A REAL INTERNATIONAL MUST DEVELOP IN THE STRUGGLE

But such programmes must be practical. They may vary according to conditions and circumstances in each country. But they should include demands for increased wages, and shorter hours for every department of the shipping industry, both ashore and afloat; for increased insurance and unemployed benefits, with demands for unemployed relief and social insurance benefits for all colonial and semi-colonial workers;

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for a struggle for the dissolution of all shipowners' and fascist unions in the shipping industry and for the right to organise real fighting marine workers' unions of the workers' own choice; for the abolition of the P.C.5 and all other forms of blackmail, and every method of victimisation and graft; for the right of free speech, press and assembly wherever these are forbidden; for the right to organise dock committees, and also ships committees on all vessels sailing under every flag, the latter including representatives from the deck, engine room and stewarding departments.

The dockers and seamen must fight for the recognition of the harbour and ship committees by the shipowners, as the collective expression of the whole of the crew manning any ship or groups working on any dock, etc.

By developing unity around such programmes of demands, fighting for equality, for the colonial and coloured workers, we shall organise all the marine workers irrespective of race, colour, religion or nationality. These demands must always be connected with a struggle against the shipowners' policy of "peace in the shipping industry" operated by the social fascist trade union officials and the shipowners' fascist unions. Therefore the fight is objectively always one against such unions as the National Union of Seamen, the British shipowners' fascist union.

The policy of a fighting International of marine workers must be a flexible one. It must assist and enable them to unite in a struggle nationally and internationally for their immediate economic and political demands. But the struggle for the immediate demands must be a means for developing the general struggle for the ultimate aims of

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the international working class. Therefore, every form of economic and political struggle engaged in by the marine workers must at least objectively become a part of the development of the general struggle for power by the international proletariat, the overthrow of the capitalist system. This will mark the big difference between the policy of the new international of marine workers and the industrial peace policy of the I.T.F., owned lock, stock and barrel by agents of the European imperialists.

SUPPORT FOR COLONIAL WORKERS

With such a policy the new marine workers' International will be constantly engaged in cooperating closely with its affiliated marine workers' unions and opposition and minority groups. In this way it will participate directly in all forms of national and international activity, It will give direct advice and assistance that will enable the national organisations to deepen and widen their influence and to consolidate themselves organisationally. It will participate directly in all struggles of marine workers. Especially will it pay great attention and give direct assistance to the struggling colonial and coloured seamen, dockers and boatmen, assisting them to develop their unions in every country. This assistance must be coupled with a relentless war against all forms of anti-working-class activity of the I.T.F. and the treacherous native allies in every colonial country. The International of marine workers will become the champion of the oppressed colonial seamen, dockers or boatmen. Economic, political and social equality will be its central slogan in defending and organising coloured and colonial seamen.

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The campaign for a new marine workers' International

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must be connected with the organisation of the unemployed seamen, dockers and river workers. Firstly, all unemployed marine workers must be encouraged to remain in the militant-class unions, revolutionary oppositions and minority groups in the marine industry. They must also become a force for popularising the policy of the proposed new International and used as shock brigades in strengthening the campaigns and for selling and distributing literature dealing directly with the need for a militant International of marine workers. But the unemployed can only be fully utilised if in practice the militant unions and minority groups properly connect unemployed demands with the demands of the employed seamen, harbour or river workers, and vice versa. We must pay special attention to the unorganised and draw them into the class unions or opposition groups wherever they exist. Where no unions exist militant-class unions must be organised. In this way the campaign for a new International becomes a part of the daily struggle of the unemployed as well as employed marine workers, and completes the united front struggle from below of all workers in the industry.

One of the best means for carrying out the campaign for the new International is by creating ship and dock committees. These all-embracing committees must be representative of each category of workers, irrespective of whether they are organised or not, and elected by them. By the utilisation of these ships and dock committees the campaign can be widely extended. These campaigns must be connected with every phase of activity. This will enable the national organisations to elect delegates to the first Constituent Congress by democratically centralised methods from the rank and file employed directly on the ships and docks. This will also produce a fundamental difference
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between the representation at the Congress of the militant marine workers' International and that which constitutes the I. T. F. Congress dominated by bureaucratic trade union officials and shipowners' agents.

Finally, the successful development of a fighting International, which will be the only real united international organisation of seamen, harbour and river workers existing, is bound up with the organisation of seamen's unions in several countries, chief among which is Great Britain, and with the expansion of those independent-class unions within the shipping industry. There must also be a strengthening of the work of all opposition and minority groups around a campaign for the new International inside the reactionary unions everywhere. This policy will enable the workers to oppose the shipowners' offensive they are now preparing upon the existing miserable living standards. It will enable the marine workers to take the offensive for the international eight-hour day which can only be had by open struggle with the shipowners.

Properly connecting the economic demands with a struggle against fascism in the shipping industry, rationalisation and "industrial peace," with a struggle against preparations for war and defence of the U. S. S. R. will rally the disorganised seamen and dock workers under the banner of the fighting International of seamen and harbour workers, and thus enable them to beat back the united front of reactionary and fascist union officials and the shipowners both nationally and internationally.